

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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USIA-06 IGA-02 OMB-01 EB-07 TRSE-00 AGR-05 DHA-02

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FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5158

INFO AMEMBASSY KIGALI

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUJUMBURA 0019

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, PFOR, BY

SUBJECT: INCLUSION OF BURUNDI IN FY 1977 AID REQUEST

REF 75 BUJUMBURA 884 NOTAL, 75 BUJUMBURA 868 NOTAL

SUMMARY: AS ANTICIPATED BUJUMBURA 884, POLOFF HARPER AND I HAD OVER FOUR HOUR MOST INFORMAL MEETING WITH PRESIDENT MICOMBERO AND SECGEN PRESIDENCY NIKOBAMYE EVENING JAN 11. WE REVIEWED ALL ASPECTS OF BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS IN UTTERLY FRANK AND FRIENDLY FASHION. WHILE PRESIDENT WOULD MAKE NO COMMITMENTS ABOUT FUTURE BURUNDI POSITIONS ON INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ISSUES OF CONCERN TO U.S., HE INDICATED THAT IT WOULD BE SOMEWHAT EASIER TO TAKE AMERICAN INTERESTS INTO ACCOUNT IF THERE WERE TANGIBLE EVIDENCE IN BURUNDI THAT THE U.S. WAS CONTRIBUTING TO BURUNDI'S EFFORTS AT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. I WOULD NOT RPT NOT TRANSLATE THIS INTO MUCH LIKELIHOOD OF CHANGE IN NEAR FUTURE IN BURUNDI'S UNITED NATIONS STANCE AGAINST US ON MOST POLITICAL QUESTIONS, BUT, AS I NOTED IN BUJUMBURA 868, IT IS THE ABSENCE OF ANY SIGN OF AMERICAN CONCERN WITH BURUNDI'S POVERTY THAT MAKES IT SO EASY FOR GRB TO BRUSH OUR POLITICAL DEMARCHES ASIDE. THE DANGLING OF A SPECIFIC AMERICAN CARROT, SUCH AS THE INCLUSION IN THE FY 1977 AID BUDGET OF

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A MODEST BILATERAL AID PROGRAM THUS REMAINS AN INDISPENSABLE

DIPLOMATIC TOOL FOR GETTING A SERIOUS LONG TERM DIALOGUE GOING WITH THE OTB ON MATTERS OF CONCERN TO UNITED STATES. I ONLY HOPE THAT IT IS NOT RPT NOT TOO LATE FOR SUCH AN INCLUSION.

END SUMMARY

1. MICOMBERO LISTENED ATTENTIVELY WHILE I REVIEWED GENERAL AMERICAN POLICY TO ASSIST DEVELOPMENTAL EFFORTS IN WORLD'S POOREST NATIONS, AS WELL AS MY OWN INTEREST IN SEEING THIS TRANSLATED INTO TERMS OF CONCRETE PROGRAM IN BURUNDI. I HAD DEVOTED MANY CONVERSATIONS TO THIS PROBLEM DURING MY SEPTEMBER CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON, AND I HAD LEFT THE U.S. WITH SOME OPTIMISM THAT MODEST AID FOR BURUNDI MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN FY 1977 BUDGET. THEN, HOWEVER, HAD COME SERIES OF ACTIONS BY BURUNDI IN UNITED NATIONS AND ELSEWHERE WHICH PREJUDICED AMERICAN INTERESTS. I RECOUNTED HISTORY OF HOW BURUNDI HAD RENEGED ON PROMISE TO ABSTAIN ON ANTI-ZIONISM RESOLUTION AND REFERRED TO INSULTINGLY ANTI-AMERICAN SPEECH ON KOREA MADE IN UNGA COMMITTED BY AMBASSADOR NDABANIWE. NOW THERE WAS BURUNDI'S RECOGNITION OF SOVIET AND CUBAN BACKED MPLA. FACT WAS THAT A BILATERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM HAD TO BE FOUNDED ON SOME MUTUAL COMPREHENSION AND RESPECT FOR INTERESTS OF BOTH PARTIES; YET BURUNDI NEVER SHOWED ANY SIGN OF TAKING U.S. NEEDS INTO ACCOUNT. ONLY PRESIDENT MICOMBERO COULD SPEAK AUTHORITATIVELY ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE IN THIS SITUATION WHICH MIGHT HAVE SOME INFLUENCE IN REVERSING CURRENTLY NEGATIVE WASHINGTON ATTITUDE ABOUT AID FOR BURUNDI.

2. MICOMBERO REPLIED THAT BURUNDI FOLLOWED NON-ALIGNED POLICY. IT HAD ATTACKED THE USSR FOR INVADING CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1968, AND IT WOULD FOLLOW ITS PRINCIPLES IN OTHER SITUATIONS. IT FAVORED UNITY FOR DIVIDED PEOPLES, AND NORTH KOREA SEEMED THE REAL PROPONENT OF REUNITING KOREA. BESIDES, PYONGYANG GAVE AID TO BURUNDI. HE HAD NOT KNOWN ABOUT THE NDABANIWE SPEECH AT THE UNGA, BUT THOSE REMARKS WERE NO DOUBT MADE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE THEN PREVAILING TENSE ATMOSPHERE AND THEIR IMPORTANCE WAS NOT GREAT. (WE KEPT RETURNING TO THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF SUCH TALK WITH PROFESSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP AND WILL SEND COPY OF TEXT TO PRESIDENT.) ON ANGOLA, HE REITERATED MANY TIMES THAT SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT AGAINST

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MPLA HAD BEEN DECISIVE IN HIS DECISION TO SUPPORT NETO. ANYONE FIGHTING APARTHEID WAS A "GOOD GUY", AND SOVIET AND CUBAN HELP WAS VERY WELCOME. HE DID NOT DEFEND THE ANTI ZIONISM RESOLUTION, BUT SAID ISRAEL HAD TO WATCH ITS STEP LEST IT BECOME AS TOTALLY ISOLATED AS SOUTH AFRICA.

3. MICOMBERO ADDED THAT IT WAS RIDICULOUS TO THINK OF HIM AS PRO-COMMUNIST. HE WAS A STRONG PRACTICING CATHOLIC.

EQUALLY FOOLISH WAS LABELLING HIM AS ANTI-AMERICAN OR ANTI-WESTERN. NO WHITE HAD EVER SUFFERED DISCRIMINATION IN BURUNDI, AND BURUNDI WELCOMED U.S. ENTREPRENEURS. YET HE COULD NOT RPT NOT BECOME PRO-AMERICAN EITHER. WE WERE ASKING HIM TO MAKE A PUBLIC GESTURE BY SWITCHING POSITIONS AT THE UNGA, BUT HOW COULD HE EXPLAIN SUCH A STEP TO HIS COLLABORATORS? WAS THERE A SINGLE TANGIBLE AMERICAN AID PROJECT IN THE COUNTRY TO WHICH HE COULD POINT AS A SIGN OF AMERICA'S INTEREST IN BURUNDI'S DEVELOPMENT? HE KNEW ALL ABOUT OUR INDIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGH UN AGENCIES, BUT WHERE WAS A SPECIFIC SCHOOL, HOUSING PROJECT, OR OTHER SIGNIFICANT FACILITY BUILT BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE?

4. MICOMBERO WAS TOLD THAT NO PRELIMINARY POLITICAL GESTURE WAS BEING SOUGHT. HOWEVER, HE HAD EXPLAINED BURUNDI'S OVERRIDING NATIONAL INTEREST; IT WAS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. AMERICA HAD ITS INTERESTS TOO, THOUGH OF A DIFFERENT SORT. HOW COULD AID COLLABORATION BE WELL FOUNDED IF IT WAS BASED ON U.S. SUPPORT FOR BURUNDI'S DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVES, BUT TOTAL BURUNDI DISDAIN FOR AMERICAN'S INTERESTS? MICOMBERO REJOINED THAT WE SHOULD NOT IMPOSE CONDITIONS ON FUTURE AID. WE DENIED ANY SUCH INTENTION, BUT STATED THAT

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FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5159

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUJUMBURA 0019

THERE HAD TO BE SOME BASIS OF COMPREHENSION BEFORE COOPERATION COULD BEGIN AND FLOURISH. WE HAD NEITHER BELGIUM'S EX-COLONIAL TIES NOR FRANCE'S FRANCOPHONE INTERESTS TO GET US INVOLVED. HE SAID THAT ONCE THERE WAS A TANGIBLE AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION, IT WOULD BE MORE NATURAL FOR BURUNDI TO CONSIDER U.S. INTERESTS ON PARTICULAR ISSUES. FOR EXAMPLE, SINCE RURAL HOUSING WAS A TOP PRIORITY, COULD NOT THE U.S. DO SOMETHING IN THAT FIELD WHICH WOULD GENERATE GOOD WILL AND GIVE HIM SOME LEEWAY FOR TAKING U.S. WISHES INTO ACCOUNT? I SAID THAT, IF U.S. STARTED ANY MODEST PROGRAM HERE, IT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY FOCUS ON AREAS, SUCH AS FOOD PRODUCTION, WHICH AFFECTED MASSES OF BURUNDI, AND IN THIS CONNECTION, I ASKED DISCREETLY WHETHER TUTSI-HUTU ANIMOSITIES POSED ANY PROBLEMS FOR AN AID PROGRAM, SINCE SOME AMERICAN OFFICIALS STILL HAD BAD MEMORIES OF THE 1972 "EVENTS" (KILLINGS). MICOMBERO SAID THAT ALL BURUNDI CITIZENS REGARDLESS OF ETHNIC ORIGIN LOOKED THE SAME TO HIM, AND HE WAS PREACHING NATIONAL UNITY AND TRYING TO FOSTER CONCEPT OF SINGLE NATIONAL LOYALTY IN ALL OF HIS WORK. HE IMPLIED THAT ALL PAST TUTSI-HUTU TROUBLES STEMMED FROM OLD ACTIVITIES OF THE BELGIANS, BUT IN ANY CASE CLAIMED THAT HIS POLICY AT HOME (AS IN REGARD TO SOUTH AFRICA) WOULD STRESS THE HUMAN DIGNITY

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OF EACH INDIVIDUAL.

5. COMMENT: BOTH IMMEDIATELY AFTER FOREGOING LONG CONVERSATION AND NEXT DAY, MICOMBERO MADE KNOWN TO US HIS GREAT SATISFACTION WITH CANDOR AND RELAXED ATMOSPHERE. HE TWICE STATED THAT HE (THROUGH NIKOBAMYE) WILL ALWAYS BE AVAILABLE TO LOOK INTO ANY PROBLEMS THAT THE EMBASSY CANNOT SOLVE THROUGH NORMAL CHANNELS. HE IS PLEASED WITH THE START OF A DIALOGUE AND I TOO BELIEVE THAT IT COULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TO MORE IMPORTANT SUBSTANTIVE EXCHANGES. THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN HOWEVER WITHOUT CONCRETE INPUT FROM U.S. SIDE TO BEGIN TO CREATE SITUATION IN WHICH THERE IS SOME AMERICAN LEVERAGE IN THE PICTURE. AS 75 BUJUMBURA 868 AND PREVIOUS MESSAGES HAVE STRESSED, THERE IS NO ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION FOR BURUNDI'S CONTINUED EXCLUSION FROM THE GREAT MASS OF AFRICAN NATIONS WHICH RECEIVE SOME AMERICAN AID. WASHINGTON'S OBJECTIONS HAVE BEEN POLITICAL, TRADITIONALLY ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION, AND MORE RECENTLY ON BURUNDI'S UNGA STANCE. ON THE FORMER PROBLEM, MICOMBERO, WHILE NOT RPT NOT REALLY AS INNOCENT AS HE PRETENDS ON TUTSI DISCRIMINATION AGAINST HUTUS, IS ABOUT AS FORWARD LOOKING A BURUNDI LEADER AS IN LIKELY TO APPEAR IN THE SENSE OF CAUTIOUSLY PROMOTING ETHNIC RECONCILIATION IN THE COUNTRY. AN AMERICAN AID PROGRAM COULD BE ORIENTED TO HELP THE HUTU MASSES AND WOULD, ADDITIONALLY, GIVE US A BASIS FOR THE TYPE OF MODEST INTERVENTION ON ETHNIC ISSUES WHICH I MADE WITH MICOMBERO

ON JANUARY 11. ON THE UNGA NETTLE, I WOULD BE UNREALISTIC TO
PROMISE PROGRESS IN BURUNDI AS THE RESULT OF AN AID PROGRAM,
WHEN THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH PROGRAMS ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA
HAS NOT PER SE HAD MUCH POSITIVE POLITICAL EFFECT. NONETHELESS,
AN AID PROGRAM, OR EVEN THE POSSIBILITY OF A PROGRAM, AS
EVIDENCED BY BURUNDI'S INCLUSION IN THE FY 1977 BUDGET
PRESENTATION, WOULD BE A FIRST FOOT IN THE DOOR TOWARD BUILDING
UP SOME MUTUAL INTERESTS AND LEVERAGE WHICH, IN DUE COURSE,
MIGHT LEAD TO OCCASIONAL BURUNDI ABSTENTIONS IN UNGA ISSUES,
INSTEAD OF CONSTANT OPPOSITION TO AMERICAN POSITIONS.
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